The Orthodox Herald

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Volume 52, No. 10 ISSUE 621 February 2004 www.orthodoxherald.homestead.com

THREE WEEKS AND BANG

What a difference! The Church so gently led us into Great Lent with the three-week period (Triodion) where we were instructed about repentance, humility, fasting and forgiveness.

Then, the first week of the Great Lent, Clean Week hits us with special demands. One of these in many Orthodox Churches is the reading of the Canon of Andrew of Crete. This service is also known as Pokloney (Prostrations).

Who was St. Andrew of Crete? He is also know as Andrew the Jerusalemite so that he not be confused with another St. Andrew of Crete. St. Andrew of Crete, who wrote the Great Canon, was born in Damascus in 660. He was a monk in Jerusalem for over 10 years. He was ordained to serve in the church of Jerusalem. He was selected to go to the Sixth Ecumenical Council which was held in Constantinople in 685. This council condemned monotheism which taught that Jesus had one will by declaring that he had two wills – one human and one divine.

He lived in several monasteries in Constantinople serving as director of an orphanage and of an old man's home among other assignments. He stayed here until he was elevated to archbishop for the sea of Gorlyna in Crete about the year 700.

St. Andrew gained a reputation of being an exceptionally eloquent preacher and religious poet. He wrote many short hymns, each with its own unique melody, which are called idiomela. He was the first one to introduce a composition of prayers which are called canons. This is best seen in his Great Canon of Repentance which has more than 250 stanzas and served as a model for other Canons. Many prostrations are made during its reading. Many of his homilies have also been preserved.

In 726 Emperor Leo III the Isaurian

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O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of laziness, despair, lust of power and idle talk,

But give rather the spirit of Chastity, Humility, Patience and Love to Thy servant,

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen.

~ St Ephraim the Syrian

PRAYER OF ST. EPHRAIM

This prayer is used during many church services in Great Lent which we are entering on February 23 this year. It is such a beautiful and encompassing prayer that many have added it to their daily prayers said throughout the year. Some have enlarged it on the copy machine and framed it and placed it over their work area. Others have laminated it and keep it as a bookmark in their Bible and/or prayer book. When you say this prayer – stop and meditate on it especially the first few words: "O Lord and Master of my life..." What peace these words give you to continue with the rest of the prayer.

* * * * * *

DEFINITION OF SUCCESS - To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others, to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, a tree planted or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived.

YOUR LENTEN CHALLENGE: INVITE A FRIEND TO CHURCH!

Here are some of the most common excuses you may encounter when you invite someone to come to Church as well as what YOU can say to answer them.

What THEY might say: "I can pray at home"
What YOU reply: "We can and should say prayers at home, but we don't come to Church just to pray! We come to Church to be with God in ways that we cannot experience anywhere else. The Church is GOD'S home and God is with us in the Church through the Holy Icons, in Holy Scripture and in Holy Communion. It is not possible to experience so much of God's presence ANYWHERE else like this except in Church!

What THEY might say: "The Divine Liturgy lasts too long!"
What YOU reply: "Is an hour too much to give to God who watches over us 24 hours a day, seven days a week? Jesus said to His own apostles, 'Can you not stay with me for just one hour?'

What THEY might say: "I work hard all week, I need to relax on Sunday"
What YOU reply: "We are nothing without God. Our ability to work all week long and to enjoy the things that our hard work buys is really a gift from God – who deserves our thanks, which we give most specially in Church!"

What THEY might say: "The Church is full of hypocrites"
What YOU reply: "That is correct. Christ founded His church not for saints but for sinners! However, aren't WE the real hypocrites when we judge other people when Jesus said all just judgment belongs to Him?

What THEY might say: "I don't like

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THE ORTHODOX HERALD
(USPS 600-140)
(ISSN 0744-1495)
Published monthly by
The Orthodox Herald, Inc.
Transjurisdictional Publication
Special non-profit rate
Entered as Periodical-Class Mail at
Hunlock Creek, PA 18621 and Scranton, PA 18505
an additional mailing office.
Founders and Editors: V. Rev. W. Basil
Stroyen, M.A., Ph.D., D.D. and Nina Bohush
Stroyen, R.N., D.D., D. Litt
Computerist Betty Kovach
Web Master - Michael Wesdell
Annual Subscription $8.00 a year.
$12.00 for two years.
Packet Plan Rate on Request
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
P.O. Box 9
Hunlock Creek, PA 18621-0009
Phone 570-256-7232
Web www.orthodoxherald.homestead.com
Contributions are tax-deductible
Published since 1952

CHRONOLOGY

RELICS OF THE MARTYR ST. VALENTINE were presented to the Russian Orthodox Church to be placed in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow. The gift was from the Catholic community of the Italian town of Terni. In recent years, some in Russia have been celebrating St. Valentine's Day on February 14. However, he is commemorated on July 19 by the Orthodox Church.

AT THE FALL SESSION OF THE OCA SYNOD OF BISHOPS, they were briefed on the efforts to minister to new immigrants, especially from central and eastern Europe; heard about the establishment of the Blessed Arseny Institute in Winnipeg, Canada and the need to continue research on the life of Bishop Arseny.

THOSE WHO HAVE TAKEN the express night train between St. Petersburg and Moscow can now take a morning train. It will run three times a week.

AN EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHS of Valaam Monastery and 19th century photos of the daily life of Diveevo and other Russian women's monasteries can be seen at the heartland Orthodox Christian Museum in Kansas until 4/14/04. For info call 785/234-5993.

IN THE WASHINGTON DC AREA a collection if 150 pieces of Russian porcelain produced from 1744-1917 will be on exhibit from June 1-Dec. 31. Also on display is a rare embroidered icon produced in Solvychegodsk in 1660. For info www.hillwoodmuseum.com

A RUSSIAN ORTHODOX SUMMER YOUTH CAMP will be held for children aged 8-16. The Camp was started in 1960. Applications must be accompanied by a baptismal certificate signed by a Russian Orthodox priest. Campers live in cabins named after Orthodox saints. The camp is run by Pathfinders scouting organization. For info, write PO Box 256, Rock City, IL 61070 or call 815/449-2765.

PATRIARCH ALEXEI has proposed setting up an autonomous metropolia in Western Europe. Metropolitan Antony (Bloom) has been assigned to coordinate this effort.

NOW IN RUINS in Istanbul is the monastery of St. John of Studion. It was renowned as a place where prayers were said around the clock – 24 hours. The monks were driven from the monastery in 1453 at the fall of Constantinople. Many monasteries n Mount Athos and the Kiev Pechersky Monastery follow the Studite Rule which was written in 900 AD by St. Theodore of this monastery. A monastery is being started in the U.S to use the Studite Rule.

GOING ALMOST UNNOTICED is the destruction of small, Orthodox Churches and shrines in Israel. These churches often appear in poor condition on the exterior, while the interior is often lit only by candles or oil lamps. Some Jewish military officers order them to be destroyed because they feel they can do this with impunity.

MISUNDERSTOOD IS THE REGULATION concerning the visit of clergy to people in hospitals and nursing homes. The regulation specifically provides that hospitals may continue the practice of disclosing directory information, including religious affiliation, to members of the clergy unless the patient has objected.

PEOPLE WITH A M.DIV. DEGREE can continue their studies toward a Doctor of Ministry at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in partnership with Antiochian House of Studies. Courses are taught in one week intensive sessions over a three year period. For info call 800/451-4194 or e-mail chambrick-stowe@pts.edu

AN UNUSUAL CHAPEL has been included in St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in West Babylon, NY. The Zoodochos Peghe chapel located to the right of the main altar, has a fountain with running water, reminiscent of the church of the same name in Constantinople. The church also contains a chapel dedicated to St. Nectarios, one dedicated to SS. Constantine and Helens and another to St. Barbara.

A TWO-SET VIDEO of the Consecration of SS Cyril and Methodius Church at Camp Nazareth on August 16-17, 2003 is available from Camp Nazareth Gift Shop, 339 Pew Road, Mercer, PA 16137. Send $45 for "VHS" format, $55 for DVD format and $55 for European Conversion VHS.

AT THE GREEK ARCHDIOCESAN COUNCIL MEETING in New York, a report was given which concluded that: "the spiritual renewal of existing parishes is the most important issue that needs to be addressed" and that a national campaign to encourage parish renewal and to reach out to lapsed Orthodox is needed.

ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH in New York was a 25 by 55 foot area in one corner of a parking lot across the street from Ground Zero. Under the new plan, the immediate area around the church site will be a park with the new St. Nicholas, located in its midst facing Ground Zero. The much disputed cross formed by two intersecting girders that was left standing in the debris may be moved next to the new St. Nicholas church.

THE CARPATHO-RUSYN SOCIETY has published a 10th anniversary sales catalog. It contains articles from the Carpathian area. For a copy write 125 Westland Dr., Pittsburgh, PA 15217-2538 or call 412-749-9899 or visit web site at www.carpathorusynsociety.org

CELL PHONE COMPANIES are seeking space on church steeples and paying rent of $1000 to $3000 a month. The payment depends on the pastor's negotiating skills and the locations desirability. The ELCA helps its congregations and perhaps they can give info 800-638-3522 or try www.elca.org/os/legal/index.html.

(Continued from front page)

THREE WEEKS AND BANG

issued an edict condemning the use of ikons. Although those who opposed him, were systematically persecuted and Patriarch Germanos was deposed St. Andrew remained at the forefront of defending the use of ikons. He died in 740.

Why is the Canon he wrote called the Great Canon? It is called this not only because of its long length when compared with other Canons but because of its style and content. It contains many pious references to both the Old and New Testament and many symbolic allusions. The theme is that St. Andrew urges all souls to imitate good deeds, to shun evil ones and to return to God through repentance.

"O Christ, where shall I begin to mourn the deeds of my wretched life? Where shall I start this mourning? Since Thou are compassionate, grant me the forgiveness of my sin. Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me!"

(Continued from front page)

YOUR LENTEN CHALLENGE

the priest"
What YOU reply: "The church is not just a building and it is not just one person – the priest. The Church is the living Body of Christ on earth and it is your family. It is where you belong! Even should the imperfections of the priest – who is human just like you – become hurtful, this should never keep you away from where you really belong – YOUR PARISH FAMILY!

PRIVATE CONFESSION

Why is the church necessary for us to make a confession? Can't God forgive us our sins "directly?" Isn't He everywhere present and always ready to show mercy to sinner?

Of course God is everywhere and is always ready to show mercy to sinners?

Of course God is everywhere and is always ready to receive repentant sinners. But God has revealed Himself to us in His Son, Jesus Christ, who founded the Church and filled it with the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the same way that we go to Church to be baptized and chrismated, to be married and buried, to hear the Word of God and to receive Holy Communion, so we go also to confess our sins and to receive the Grace to be reunited with God, the Father, in the Holy spirit by Holy Communion to the Body and Blood of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We confess in the presence of the priest as if we are confessing to all. When a person hesitates to confess in the presence of the priest alone, which is a practice that evolved only after centuries of fully open and public confession before the whole church community and the entire society, he or she is welcome to confess in the presence of everyone in a fully public manner. The present practice is a condescension to our human frailty. It is not at all, in the Orthodox understanding, a practice built upon a doctrine of priestly power and authority alone.

If we come to the Church to receive all that we have from God, including the Holy Bible and Divine Revelation, which was given by God to the Church of the Old and New Testaments, how odd it would be if we did not come to the same Church to confess our sins and to receive forgiveness and MERCY!

(Borrowed)

JUDGED BY A MAGNIFICENT FATHER

Each one of us has numerous voices which we sometimes listen to in our heads. A voice which we do not like is the voice which accuses us. Sometimes it can be very severe. It is good to note what this voice says because it helps us live in the world with good values.

But it is not always as this voice tells us. Sometimes it accuses us of things of which we are not guilty, or in which our guilt is minimal. If we always accept what this voice says we can become very unhappy and this will make it difficult for us to do the good works that we ought to do in this world.

What a joy to hear in Luke 15:11-32 Jesus' parable about the magnificent father who so firmly respected his son's freedom and who was so ready to accept him in his repentance and to return him to the bosom of his family. What joy to realize that it is our Heavenly Father, our Creator and our Judge that Jesus invites us to view in this way.

It is truly important for us to always keep this parable in our hearts and in our minds. But there are things that get in the way. We tend to forget. We also tend to doubt that God could truly look upon us in this way because we feel that we do not deserve to be so regarded.

But there it is: that is indeed the way God judges us and loves us. Let us love each other and ourselves in the same way.

Ihor George Kutash, Priest

BIBLE QUIZ

Each of these passages from the New Testament is a quotation from the Old Testament. Name the Old Testament book.

1. Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. (Matt 5:43)
2. Behold, I send my messenger before my face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. (Matt. 11:10)
3. Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased; I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. (Matt 12:18)
4. By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. (Matt 13:14)
5. I will open my mouth in parables: I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. (Matt 13:35)
6. This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. (Matt. 15:8)
7. My house shall be a house of prayer. (Matt. 21:13)

ANSWERS
1. Leviticus 19:18
2. Malachi 3:1
3. Isaiah 42:1
4. Isaiah 6:9
5. Psalm 78:2
6. Isaiah 29:13
7. Isaiah 56:7

LIGHTER MOMENT

Teacher; "Tommy your paper is exactly the same as Joey's. Even the misspelled words are the same. How do you explain that?" Tommy: "I used his pencil."

MORNING DEVOTIONS

Did you ever think about how much care is put into our physical appearance before we go out into the world each day? How about the time we spend on such routines as walking the dog, picking up a newspaper or listening to the news, downloading the e-mail, making breakfast, getting the kids off to school, watering the plants, etc.?

How much time do you spend with God in the morning?

Morning prayer brings harmony into our lives by conversing with God our Creator at the beginning of the day, these our wakening moments, set the tone for its remainder. The Psalmist states, "Morning by morning I will destroy all the wicked in the land, cutting off all the evildoers from the city of the Lord. *(Psalm 101:8)* It is not "flesh and blood" *(Ephesians 6:12)* that he is talking about, but any evil thing and harmful attitude that darkens the soul and makes it lifeless and keeps our focus away from God.

Prayer is the armor that protects the believer from the daily assaults of devil and his legion. God always gives us the grace to handle any unforseen circumstance; there is never anything that will happen that He does not know about. Our character is reflected on how we prayerfully react to these happenings.

Morning prayer is a refreshing oasis that fills the heart, mind and soul with "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control *(Galatians 5:22)*

When praying, the quantity of words is not important, but quality. For beginners, three minutes in the morning can be a way to commit the day to God.

Just as "early in the morning He *(Jesus)* came again to the temple; all the people came to Him, and He sat down and taught them" *(John 8:2)*, a vital part of morning devotions is reading the Bible and listening to Christ the Word, Whose "mercies are new every morning" *(Lamentations 3:23)*. It is He who helps us take on the day by "training our hands for battle, our fingers for war" *(Psalm 144:1)*.

Let us never fail to give thanks to the Lord because He has graciously awakened us this morning, and given us this ***new day as a gift*** to live in a deeper communion with Him, so that we may "proclaim His kindness at dawn and His faithfulness throughout watches of the night." *(Psalm 92:3)*.

Raymond J. Mastroberte
Iconographer

WINTER'S GRACE

According to an article in The New York Times, the act of smiling can promote good feelings. The author of the article cites experiments in which researchers found that saying the word cheese caused a person to smile, which in turn created pleasant feelings. On the other hand, saying the word few created a different facial expression, which resulted in negative emotions.

Interesting as such a study may be, there's a better way to have peace and gladness. It works from the inside out, not from the outside in.

Many of us will read the Psalms during this great Lent. We will note in Psalm 4 that David set forth several courses of action when he was feeling deeply distressed. He asked God for relief and mercy in verse 1 "Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer."

He took comfort in knowing that he was favored by Him and that the Lord heard him when he called (v.3) "The Lord will hear when I call unto Him."

David was quiet before God as we see in verse 4: "Stand in awe and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still."

He did right and put his trust in Him (v.5): Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord."

He rested in the assurance of God's peace and safety as we see in verse 8:" I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."

David was confident that he would receive gladness in his heart as a gift from God, not as a result of some forced smile that might bring a temporary good feeling. He writes in verse 7; "Thou hast put gladness in my heart."

Trusting in God brings inner peace and joy beyond compare.

A VALUABLE LESSON

"Church First," these were the words I heard from one of our Babas when I commented on how hard she was working in the church. Years of prayer and obedience to Church and Holy Tradition had instilled in her a true Christian mindset, Christ and His Church comes first, there will be time and money for everything else later, if God wills.

What a difference from the way the world teaches us to live. Consider how aggressive our society is, we easily fall into a pattern of life that is so hectic it's hard to find time on Sunday morning to go to Church, let alone on Saturday evenings or Holy days. So aggressive is our society that our first financial priority becomes the rent and mortgage payments, then loans and utility bills but somehow God blesses so that there is enough to pay our Church dues and a little for the weekly offering. Our life becomes a maddening circle, we work to survive so that we may work another day.

Let all of us learn from the Babas; if we wish to live a pleasant and God pleasing life, Christ and His Church comes first. If we try to live this way, God will care for us in a most wonderful way but we must make the attempt to live this way. Begin slowly, by working for the church periodically. At first it will be a burden but soon it will turn to joy. This is how we learn what it truly means to "Commend ourselves and each other and our whole life unto Christ our God."

Father Andrew Fetchina

OVER THERE

In the Carpathians the young girls wore their headkerchiefs tied under their chins. If their hair was done up they could go bareheaded. Married women, on the other hand, were not allowed to go bareheaded.

* * * * * *

The devil is not afraid of the Bible or prayer book that has dust on it.

* * * * * *

Give your time to improving yourself, and you'll have little time left for criticizing others.

PORT LIONS, ALASKA

The night before we left Kodiak for Port Lions we received news that housing plans had changed, and we would be providing our own meals. So, armed with a list of healthy foods suggested by our team leader, Fr. John, we headed to a late night grocery store for provisions. With this task completed, we carried our belongings back to the seminary for the next leg of our journey.

Our trip to Port Lions was on a salmon fishing boat. The scenery we passed was incredibly beautiful, yet I found myself thinking about what lay ahead. There would be more spiritual warfare; that was certain. More importantly, though, there would be new opportunities to meet with other Orthodox Christians and share our faith.

Upon our arrival, parishioners of the Nativity of the Theotokos Russian Orthodox Church met us at the dock. They transported us to our new temporary home – Port Lions School. This modern and well-equipped facility serves approximately 50 students in grades K through 12. With showers, a kitchen, telephone, and computers, it was a perfect location for us to set up residence.

The gym was our all-purpose room. During the day, it was our classroom, playground, and cafeteria. A corner of the gym had been set up for our personal use with dividers separating areas for the men and women. In the evening after prayers, sleeping bags were unrolled. Always concerned for our well being, Fr. John insisted on early "lights out."

Besides having all of the comforts of home and no commute time to our VCS, staying at the school provided us with opportunities to talk and share with each other when we weren't teaching. Those conversations at night over cups of tea were instrumental in planning lessons and helped to further bond our group.

The warm welcome we received when we first arrived continued throughout our stay. We were invited into homes and places of work. Parishioners brought us food and took us on tours around Port Lions. Our most memorable excursion came one evening after church services when someone announced that bears had been sighted. The ladies of the parish transported all of us in pickup trucks to the site. What excitement! We actually got to see a Kodiak bear and her two cubs – and we have the pictures to prove it!

Another time, our trip took us to the village cemetery where we stopped to offer our prayers for the departed in Greek, English, and Slavonic.

But of all our experiences, my most memorable times were spent with the children and young people in Port Lions. Our VCS was blessed with both Orthodox and Protestant youth and adults. For two days, we provided a round of activities: arts and crafts, puppet shows, songs, games, and story telling. I'm grateful for having had the opportunity to share the life of St. Herman through a story to the children. After they sat attentively listening to me read, their voices echoed in the gym as they repeated the beloved Saint's famous words: "From this day, from this hour, from this minute, let us love God above all." Their voices filled the gym and my heart! Afterward, the children and teens did an art project of St. Herman. Although it was a bit difficult for the little ones, the results were beautiful. The next day when the teens came back to VCS, they all quietly sat down at a table and began to work diligently on projects. Curious, some of us went over to see what it was – a <u>second</u> scratch art icon of St. Herman!

For me, it was a delight to work with the young people. I often think of the child who shyly asked about my "pretty" three-barred cross, the young man who shared with me the custom of Starring; and the little fellow who taught me how to eat salmonberries. ("Blow in them first to blow out the bugs and the dust!!")

All too soon, it was time to leave. Our boat was unexpectedly delayed and as we waited on the dock, parishioners came to take us to their home for tea, hot soup, and sandwiches until our boat arrived. As a parting gift, our new friend provided us with homemade salmonberry jelly and syrup. I will never forget her kindness and hospitality.

On the way back to Kodiak, the weather was cold. (I was glad that I had my babushka!) As the boat drew closer to shore, a teammate asked another if our lives would change because of our experience. The veteran missionary replied, "When we return home, some of us will find joys, others tribulations. But our experience will give us the strength to help us through difficult times."

On a personal note, I did come home to tribulations, but God gave me strength each day to face every new challenge.

Being a missionary wasn't easy, but it was, by far, the most spiritually rewarding experience that I've ever had. Would I do it again? If it's God's will, yes, because: "The harvest is truly plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (Matthew 9:37-38)

Margaret Pysarchyk

Next month: Orthodoxy in Alaska

For more information on becoming or supporting a long or short-term missionary, please contact:
Orthodox Christian Mission Center
P.O. Box 4319
St. Augustine, FL 32085
Toll free: 1-800-GO-FORTH (463-6784)
Or visit their website at: www.ocmc.org

EAST AND WEST DIFFER ON LENT

Both the Eastern and the Western churches have a fast period before Easter/Pascha which lasts for 40 days. Since both churches celebrate Pascha/Easter on the same day this year – April 11, why the difference as to when the Great Lent starts?

The Eastern Churches start Great Lent on February 23, a Monday with the Vespers of Forgiveness. The Western Church starts Lent on February 25 on Ash Wednesday. Both churches teach that the Lent is 40 days long.

The Eastern Church does not count Holy Week as a part of the Great Lent. Lent is over on the evening of the 6th Friday, the vigil of Lazarus Saturday. So Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday and Holy Week are special. The Western Church counts Holy Week but not Sundays of Lent as part of Lent.

Another difference is the way Lent is started. Eastern Christians are taught in Matthew 6:14-21 to "wash thy face that thou appear not unto men to fast," while in the Western Church ashes are placed on the forehead.

This should help you in giving the Orthodox view on various aspects of Great Lent.



MEETING OF OUR LORD

The Holy Day of the Meeting of Our Lord (Streteneya) on February 2/15 is a Scriptural Holy Day meaning that you can find the whole story of the event told in the Bible in Luke 2:22-40. The epistle reading Hebrews 7:7-17 should be read to understand the importance of the meeting of Jesus with Simeon.

Forty days after Christ was born, He was presented to God in the Temple by his parents in fulfillment of the Jewish law. They were met at the Temple by Simeon and Anna who confirmed that this child was the Messiah for whom they were waiting. This is told in the Prayer of St. Simeon which is sung at every vesper service and can be found in Luke 2:29: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

It is sung at every vesper service as a hymn of thanksgiving for our Salvation and to give us the knowledge which should make us ready to depart in peace, whenever God shall call.

In Hebrews, St. Paul presents us with a comparison between the Levitic priesthood and the priesthood of Christ, of which Melchizedek, the king-priest of Salem, is the figure. The superiority of the New Testament priesthood over that of the Old is shown in a special way at this Meeting of the Lord.

Candles are blessed in many churches as a sign that Christ is the "Light of the World." At the blessing of the candles, we ask that Christ bless the candles that they may be lighted with a visible flame to dispel darkness, the same way that our hearts enlightened by the invisible light of the Holy Spirit so that we may avoid the darkness of the sins of this world.

PRAYING FOR THEM

One of my friends said that Orthodox are so involved in their prayer life. For example, one of the things that she mentioned was updating my diptych and bringing it to the church before February 14, the first Soul Saturday.

Every Orthodox Church has diptychs of the families in the parish. Diptychs take many forms but they all contain the names of the living and dead members of a family. Just before the first Soul Saturday, the lists are brought up to date. Names are added or removed from the lists as needed. The priest is asked to pray for the deceased members on the Soul Saturdays. This year, they come on February 14, March 6, 13, 20, May 29 and Dimitri Saturday.

Why do we pray for the souls of those who have "fallen asleep in the Lord?" When we remember those who have fallen asleep we are professing both faith and love: faith in God's promise of resurrection and eternal life and love for those who have departed. We are bound to one another by bonds of undefeatable love of Christ and the Holy Spirit; and we pray for one another, knowing that those who have fallen asleep have not passed into annihilation but are still among the living. We are also reminded of our own mortality and are reminded to prepare for our own passage from this life.

We include prayers for our loved ones in our daily prayers and supply our diptychs so that they can be prayed for in the community.

FUNDS

THANK YOU/SPASEBO to all of you who have sent donations to the funds.

FOR POSTAGE: Harry Homyak, Samuel Warycka, Thomas Shakun, Joseph Chrash, Marie Grabania, Walter Prosen, Steven Mikilas, Alexandria Bosko.

FOR ALASKA: Ethel Watlock, Dorothy Burochonock

FOR MISSION: Harry Homyak, Andrew Huzinec, Marie Grabania, the women of the former Russian Orthodox Mutual Aid Society.

FOR BOTH MISSION AND ALASKA: Robert Roth in memory of his beloved aunt Alexandria

Undique (from everywhere)

Jesus assumed we would pray, give alms, fast and forgive. His teachings assumed that all believers practiced these disciplines. For Him to give instruction in these practices to the believers was like discussing breathing, sleeping or eating, which were all assumed to be a part of a normal person's life. (see Matt. 6:16,17)

The blessing of bread, oil and wine on the eve of great Holy Days is called the Litya.

The Virgin Mary is mentioned 34 times in the Koran, the Moslem Holy Book. She is called "the greatest of all women," eclipsing Mohammed's own mother as well as his wives.

God does not only pay attention to the small ones, but also to those who pay attention to the small ones. Do you want God to love you? Love the small ones. Love the poor. Love the humble. (Archimandrite Joel)

We pray for the departed, not out of fear or desperation, but with hope and assurance in the God Who "has trampled down death, made powerless the devil and given life to the world." As we gather together for the Saturdays of Souls let these three promises be our guide and our hope.

Confession is a spiritual baptismal font and it is also Golgotha. We lift the burden of guilt and the consequences of our confessed sins and bury them at Golgotha. Consider the following prayer at Absolution, "May the same God who through Nathan the Prophet forgave David of the sins he confessed, who forgave Peter weeping bitterly for his denial, who forgave the sinful woman who wept at the Lord's feet, who forgave the Pharisees and the Prodigal Son, may He forgive you all your sins and transgressions, those known and those not known, through me an unworthy priest and sinner, both in this life and that which is to come. May God place your uncondemned at His awesome judgment Seat. As regards your confessed sins, be concerned no more, but depart in peace."

The word Orthodox means people who believe the right things, teach the right things and worship the right way. (Ortho-Right, Doxa-Worship, Praise, Belief)



Editor's Notes

So far we have had a very cold winter here in northeast Pennsylvania. However, we have had just enough snow to cover the ground and give a contrast to the gray winter scene. But with us being in the pre-lenten weeks, we know that change will come soon and the world will turn green, splashed with colorful flowers.

We are living in a technological world, one that is bringing great changes in the way we do things. But with this change, which is said to make things work faster, we have found that it does not mean more accurate. For example, lightly touching a few keys on the computer can accomplish much and as we found with our January issue can create a mistake many times over. Our subscriptions expire in various years. We pull out those which expire in the current year and set them aside for the mailer to enclose a resubscription envelope. The others, which have one or several more years to run, are returned to the active file. In an error, somewhere, the files were reversed. The wrong file got the subscription slips. We have caught our error, and all subscribers will get the issues they have paid for. As the Carpathian people say: "Perebachtej."

Technology has also made communication much easier. One wonders why so many trips, most times with full entourages, are being made to Eastern Europe. Surely most matters can be handled by the person who is assigned to St. Catherine's Church in Moscow. Isn't this one of the reasons why it was established? Really, with direct dialing, computers, e-mail, etc., can't the trips be cut down.

God be with you.

Matushka Nina Stroyen

PRESS FUND

Thank you/Spasebo to all of you who are helping us to keep publishing. Rose and Harry Kulick, Tom Swift, The Baumgarten Family, Anonymous (3), Natasha Zonitch, Anne Dorozynski, Helen Dzugan, Irene Allen, Vera and Andy Anderson, Steven Mikilas, Prdc William Weir, N. Bobrovsky, Florence Fick, William Palchik, Albert Burns, Alexandria Bosko, Valerie Kline, Dr. Dimitrios Pappas, Luba Trachuk, Doris Rusinko, Catherine Shaffchick, Dr. John and Eva Chupinsky, Ann Tysko, Ethel Watlock, Harry Homyak, Barry Stavrou, Diane and Joseph Burchick, Joseph Chrush, Leah Chrush, the women of the former Russian Orthodox Women's Mutual Aid Society, Anonymous in memory of Job. Nativity Donation by Paul Laskovich. Mary and Tim Goomas for health of Fr. Michael St. Andrew and Fr. Joe Tzougros and in grateful thanksgiving for Matushka Nina. DiFlorio Family in memory of Fr. and Matushka Felenchak and James DiFlorio, Sr., Simon and Mary Herbert in memory of George Brozina who died on Jan. 8, 2003. Rita Wrobel in thanksgiving for new apartment. Anonymous in memory of Fr. Basil. Carol Cobb in memory of Mary Kinn. John and Susan Petro in memory of Mary Kinn. John Spack in memory of George Brozina.

GIVING THANKS FOR COMMUNION

Following the receiving of Holy Communion, the mood in the church changes. Few seem to realize that following Holy Communion, when the priest has placed the Holy Chalice on the altar table and comes out to bless the people, the choir sings the positive things we have received from partaking of Holy Communion. They sing:

1. We have beheld the true Light
2. We have received the Heavenly Spirit
3. We have found the true faith
4. We worship the undivided Trinity, for it has saved us. Following this the priest shows us the chalice for the last time and we joyfully sing our thanks:

1. Let our mouths be filled with Thy praise O Lord, that we may sing Thy Glory.
2. For Thou hast vouchsafed us (granted us the privilege) to partake of Thy holy, divine, immortal, and life-giving Mysteries.
3. Preserve us in Thy holiness that all this day we may meditate upon Thy righteousness.
4. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. (Hallelujah) (A word conveying great joy)



Whatever you call them – holupki, stuffed cabbage or piggies, everyone likes them. But there are those who remove the cabbage and eat the filling only. Then there are those who ask for the extra cabbage used to line the bottom of the pot. Here is a recipe for unstuffed cabbage which gives everyone a choice without wasting food. You can use your favorite recipe for the ingredients using the method suggested here.

UNSTUFFED CABBAGE

1 small head cabbage
1 can tomatoes
1 1/2 lbs. lean ground beef
1 egg
1/2 cup raw rice
salt and pepper

Chop cabbage fine. Place in heavy pot. Break up tomatoes and add all to the cabbage. Cover. Bring to a boil. Lower heat and simmer for 25 minutes. Meanwhile, put ground meat, egg, seasonings and washed rice in a bowl. Mix well. Shape into small meatballs and set aside. Combine:

1 small can tomato sauce
1 Tbls. cider vinegar
1 Tbls. lemon juice
2 Tbls. brown sugar (packed)

Mix well and pour over the cabbage. Add meatballs in layer over the cabbage and simmer for one hour or until meatballs are done. This recipe can be made in your electric skillet.

LIGHTER MOMENT

Six year old Denise and her four-year old brother Andrew were sitting together in church. Andrew giggled, kicked the back of the pew in front of him, and talked out loud. Finally, his sister, who was ashamed of him, wanted to make him behave.

She poked him and whispered; "You're not supposed to talk loud and make noise in church."

"Why? Who's going to stop me?" Andrew asked.

Denise turned around in her seat and pointed to the back of the church. She said: "See those two men standing there? They're hushers."

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IS THIS NOT THE FAST THAT I HAVE CHOSEN?

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A FASTING DISCIPLINE



All Orthodox Christians should fast, but each person and each family must prayerfully choose and commit themselves to a fasting discipline that is suitable to their circumstances and that they can keep. Some choose to fast strictly (no meat or dairy products) throughout lent. Many choose to fast strictly only during the first week of Lent and during Holy Week. Others choose to fast from meat through Lent but some from meat, fish and dairy products only on Wednesdays and Fridays. Still others follow other forms of fasting disciplines. Children usually fast with moderation and care in order to receive the necessary nutrients for their growing bodies.

As far as ideas for Lenten foods, a number of cookbooks are now available providing many suggestions for a balanced and healthy diet. These books are helpful guidelines. But, they are not meant to undo the whole spirit of fasting causing us to be constantly preoccupied with "delicious Lenten meals!" Fasting entails not only the quality of foods but also the quantity of consumption. The key words should be moderation and simplicity of meals.

Fr. Dan Ressetar

LIGHTER MOMENT

A Sunday School teacher asked her class why Joseph and Mary took Jesus with them to Jerusalem. A small child with a serious look on his face replied," They couldn't get a baby sitter."

Home Bible Reading Schedule

FEBRUARY 2004

1. Luke 18:10-14
2. Mark 13:9-13
3. Mark 13:14-23
4. Mark 13:24-31
5. Mark 13:31-14:2
6. Mark 14:3-9
7. Luke 20:46-21:4
8. Luke 15:11-32
9. 1 John 2:18-3:10
10. 1 John 3:11-20
11. 1 John 3:21-4:6
12. 1 John 4:20-5:21
13. 2 John 1:1-13
14. 1 Cor. 10:23-28
15. 1 Cor. 8:8-9:2
16. 3 John 1:1-16
17. Jude 1:1-10
18. Joel 2:12-26
19. Jude 1:11-26
20. Zach 8:7-17
21. Romans 14:19-23; 16:25-27
22. Romans 13:11-14:4
23. Gen 1:1-13
24. Gen 1:14-23
25. Gen 1:24-2:3
26. Gen 2:4-19
27. Gen 2:20-3:20
28. Heb 1:1-12
29. Heb 11:24-26, 32-12:2

BIBLE STUDY

This month we have readings from books with which we are less familiar. We note that there are several readings from 1 John. This epistle was written by St. John, one of the 12 disciples. He is referred to us as the beloved disciple who was entrusted with the care of Christ's mother. In the 2nd chapter, he addresses his readers lovingly as little children.

Whether we are children or adults, prohibitions against bad behavior rarely motivates us to do good. Some actually stir up as a desire to disobey. If Johnny is told to stay away from the cookie jar you'll soon hear its lid rattling. The strongest motivators of good conduct are those in which we have personal investment.

A school janitor posted a sign in the front school yard that read: KEEP OFF THE GRASS. But the children continued to trample down the turf.

Then a fourth grade class had an idea. They decided that each child would be given a crocus bulb to plant along the edge of the sidewalk in the fall. As winter drew to a close, the children eagerly watched for the first sign of spring. What a power those bulbs had to keep dozens of little feet on the right path.

We too need a positive motivator to keep our feet on the right path. If our goal is to be able to stand before Christ without shame at the final judgment, we will want to obey Him. In 1 John 2:28 we read: "And now, little children, abide in Him, that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

Great Lent motivates us to review our lives and pledge to do better so that we will be ready to meet our Saviour at any time.

CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY

1. Beginning of Triodon – Sunday of Publican and Pharisee
8. Sunday of Prodigal Son
14. Soul Saturday
15. Meatfare Sunday
16. Butterweek
22. Cheesefare Sunday, Sunday of Forgiveness
23. Great Lent Begins
28. Blessing of Kolivo, St. Theodore Saturday
29. Orthodox Sunday. Restoration of Ikons